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AUTHOR Salces, Luis M.
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ABSTRACT

A descriptive analysis of changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the Chicago public school student population since 1970 was conducted. Data were drawn from annual reports prepared by the staff of the board of education. During the decade of the 1970's, the public school enrollment dropped by 119,182. This decrease was due primarily to a reduction in the number of white students and a smaller, but still substantial, decrease in the number of black students. Data also showed that Hispanics constituted the only segment of the student population that had experienced an increase during the past decade of 27,852 students or about 2,800 per year. This change was due primarily to a sharp increase of Mexican students. While in 1970 Puerto Ricans constituted the largest segment of the Hispanic student population, by 1980 Mexicans had become the largest group and the only segment still growing rapidly. An analysis of the distribution of Hispanic students in the 20 school districts indicated that there were only 2 districts where Hispanic students were in the majority, and they accounted for 38% of all Hispanic students in the city. Thus, it was concluded that most Hispanic students were in desegregated school settings. (Author/NQA)

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CHANGES IN THE RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHICAGO: 1970-1980

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Luis M. Salces, Ph.D.
O.M.A.R., Inc.
Chicago, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This report presents a descriptive analysis of changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the Chicago public school student population since 1970. The data used in this analysis has been drawn from annual reports prepared by the staff of the Board of Education. During the decade of the 70's the public school enrollment dropped by 119,182. This decrease was due primarily to a reduction in the number of white students (-114,377) and a smaller but still substantial decrease in the number of Black students (-37,985). The data also shows that Hispanics constitute the only segment of the student population that has experienced an increase during the past decade, of 27,852 students or about 2,800 per year. While in 1970 Puerto Ricans constituted the largest segment of the Hispanic student population, by 1980 Mexicans had become the largest group and the only segment still growing rapidly as of this writing. An analysis of the distribution of Hispanic students in the 20 school districts indicates that there are only two districts (#6 and #5) where Hispanic students are in the majority, and they account for 38% of all Hispanic students in the city. Thus we conclude that most Hispanic students are in desegregated school settings.

AN OVERVIEW OF CHANGES IN THE SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT POPULATION SINCE 1970

During the decade of the 70's, Chicago's public school system experienced a decline of 119,182 students, or an average of about 11,000 students per year. As indicated in the following table, the public school student population has declined consistently for the past ten years, and the end to this downward trend does not appear to be in sight.[1]

Table 1

Annual Changes in the Size of the Public School Student Population

	Number of Students	Annual Decline
1970	577,679	--
1971	574,495	- 3,184
1972	558,825	-15,670
1973	544,971	-13,854
1974	536,657	- 8,314
1975	526,716	- 9,941
1976	524,221	- 2,495
1977	512,052	-12,169
1978	494,888	-17,164
1979	477,339	-17,549
1980	458,497	-18,842

The public schools in Chicago have also experienced a change in the racial and ethnic composition of their student population. In 1970, white (non-Hispanic) children constituted 35% of the total student population, while by 1980 they represented about one fifth (18.6%) of

[1] Enrollment in public schools throughout the nation reached a peak in 1971 and since then it has shown a steady decline. Nevertheless, this trend is expected to be reversed in the 1980's because of the large number of women currently reaching child bearing age. For a more detailed discussion see Nancy B. Dearman, "Elementary and Secondary Education," in The Condition of Education: 1979 Edition, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 44-52.

all the students enrolled.[2] Black students constituted a larger proportion of the student population in 1980 (60.8%) than in 1970 (55%), although in actual numbers there was a decline of 37,985 Black students during the 70's.

Hispanics increased their share of the total student population, from 10% to 18.4%. This represents an increase of 27,852 students.

Table 2

Changes in the Racial/Ethnic Composition of Public School Students in Chicago 1970-1980[3]

	1970	1980	Difference
White	199,669 (35%)	85,292 (19%)	-114,377
Black	316,711 (55%)	278,726 (61%)	- 37,985
Hispanic	56,374 (10%)	84,226 (18%)	+ 27,852
Other	4,925 (1%)	10,253 (2%)	+ 5,328
Total	577,679 (100%)	458,497 (100%)	-119,182

[2]Since 1964 White (non-Hispanic) students have accounted for less than 50% of the total enrollment. Real Estate Research Corporation, "Projection of Population and School Enrollment by Community Area for the city of Chicago 1970 and 1975," April 1968, Table 19.

[3]Percentages have been rounded off.

LOOKING AT THE TRENDS

To determine the dynamics of student enrollment by racial and ethnic composition, we have computed the annual change--in percentages--for the three major segments of the student population. This type of analysis leads us to the following conclusions:

--The white student population has been declining every year since 1970. Between 1974 and 1975 the decline was of a lesser magnitude (-5.9%) than in the preceding two years. Since then, the school system has been losing white students at a faster rate every year, although the decline during the past three years has been of approximately equal magnitude.

--Public attention has focused on the decline of the White student population, and yet the data indicates that except for two periods (1970-71 and 1975-76) the Black student population has also experienced an annual decline. Furthermore, the annual decline of this segment has been increasing every year since 1977.

--Hispanics constitute the only segment of the student population that has experienced an annual increase during the past decade. But since the period of 1975-1976, the Hispanic student population has been growing at a slower pace.

Summarizing, the White student population has been declining every year at a rate of about ten thousand students. The Black student population has also been declining, at a rate of about 3,800 students per year, and since 1976 this group's rate of decline has been accelerating. The number of Hispanic students has been growing every year during the past decade at a rate of almost 2,800 students annually, although their rate of growth has been slowing down somewhat during the past 4 years.

Table 3

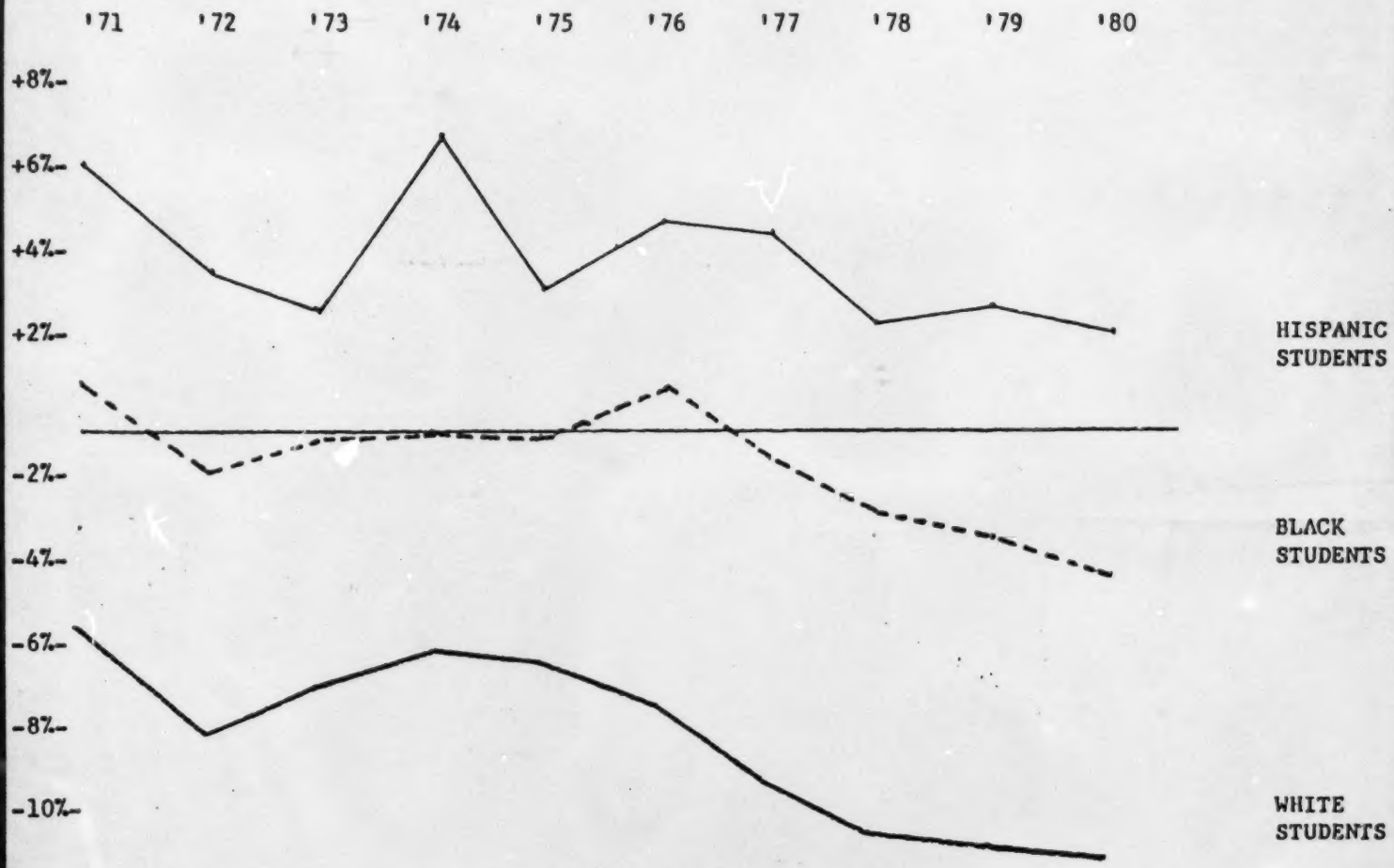
Annual Changes in the Racial/Ethnic Composition of Public School Students: 1970-1980

	White	Black	Hispanic
1970	199,669	316,711	56,374
1971	188,312	320,797	59,778
% Change	(-5.6%)	(+1.3%)	(+6.0%)
1972	173,143	317,975	61,978
% Change	(-8.1%)	(-0.8%)	(+3.7%)
1973	160,846	314,089	63,730
% Change	(-7.1%)	(-1.2%)	(+2.8%)
1974	151,290	310,880	67,952
% Change	(-5.9%)	(-1.0%)	(+6.6%)
1975	141,264	307,549	70,314
% Change	(-6.6%)	(-1.1%)	(+3.5%)
1976	130,785	311,261	73,832
% Change	(-7.4%)	(+1.2%)	(+5.0%)
1977	118,713	306,997	77,271
% Change	(-9.2%)	(-1.4%)	(+4.7%)
1978	106,581	299,590	79,526
% Change	(-10.2%)	(-2.4%)	(+2.9%)
1979	95,513	289,920	81,948
% Change	(-10.4%)	(-3.2%)	(+3.0%)
1980	85,292	278,726	84,226
% Change	(-10.7%)	(-3.9%)	(+2.8%)

Graph 1

Annual Changes in the Racial/Ethnic Composition of

Public School Students: 1970-1980



CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE HISPANIC STUDENT POPULATION SINCE 1970

At the beginning of the decade Puerto Rican students constituted the largest segment of the Hispanic student population enrolled in public schools (46%). Mexican students were the second largest group (43%), while Cubans and other Hispanic nationalities accounted for the remaining 11%.

During the 70's the Hispanic student population experienced an increase of 49%, or 27,852 students. This change was due primarily to a sharp increase of Mexican students (23,900).

The number of Puerto Ricans also increased by almost four thousand students, but their share of the total Hispanic student population actually declined to 36% in 1980; this was because of the larger increase of Mexican students.

The Cuban student population, which was already small (5%) in 1970, declined on the order of 1,186 students, while Hispanic students of Central and South American backgrounds experienced an increase in enrollment of almost the same magnitude.

Table 4

Changes in the Distribution of Hispanic Public School Students in Chicago by Nationality: 1970-1980

	1970	1980	Difference
Mexican	24,066 (43%)	47,966 (57%)	+23,900
Puerto Rican	26,176 (46%)	30,153 (36%)	+ 3,977
Cuban	2,673 (5%)	1,487 (2%)	- 1,186
Other Hispanic	3,459 (6%)	4,620 (5%)	+ 1,161
Total	56,374 (100%)	84,226 (100%)	+27,852

ANNUAL TRENDS AMONG HISPANICS

During the past decade the Hispanic student population experienced a dramatic increase (49%). In this section we analyze the characteristics of this change by looking at the annual increase of its three major segments: namely the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban student populations.

Since 1970 the Mexican student population has experienced the fastest rate of growth of any Hispanic student segment. In fact, since the beginning of the decade, the Mexican student population increased at a rate ranging from 5.1% to 9.7% annually. Furthermore, the increase during the last three school years of the decade (1976-1979) suggests a continuation of this trend.

In 1970, Puerto Ricans constituted the largest segment of the Hispanic student population; however, during the decade they experienced a very uneven rate of growth. From 1970 to 1974 their number increased at a rate ranging from 2.3% to 7%. Since then, they have showed a steady rate of decline, and beginning in 1978 the number of Puerto Rican students has actually declined.

The Cuban student population has experienced a decrease of 1,186 students since 1970. In fact, this segment experienced only one period of growth (1970-1971); since then, it has experienced a very inconsistent decline.

This analysis suggests that, if present trends continue for the next two to three years, the growth of the Hispanic student population will continue, as a result of the growth of the Mexican segment.

Table 5

Annual Changes in the Nationality Composition of Hispanic Public School Students: 1970-1980

	Mexican	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Total Hispanic
1970	24,066	26,176	2,673	56,374
1971	25,314	27,303	3,510	59,778
% Change	(+5.1%)	(+4.3%)	(+31.3%)	(+6.0%)
1972	26,869	27,946	3,277	61,978
% Change	(+6.1%)	(+2.3%)	(-6.6%)	(+3.7%)
1973	28,249	29,022	2,792	63,730
% Change	(+5.1%)	(+3.8%)	(-14.8%)	(+2.8%)
1974	30,520	31,080	2,572	67,952
% Change	(+8.0%)	(+7.0%)	(-7.8%)	(+6.6%)
1975	32,117	31,991	2,558	70,314
% Change	(+5.2%)	(+2.9%)	(-0.5%)	(+3.5%)
1976	35,253	32,360	2,377	73,832
% Change	(+9.7%)	(+1.1%)	(-7.0%)	(+5.0%)
1977	38,770	32,383	2,096	77,271
% Change	(+9.9%)	(+.07%)	(-11.8%)	(+4.7%)
1978	40,982	32,246	1,997	79,526
% Change	(+5.7%)	(-.42%)	(-4.7%)	(+2.9%)
1979	44,720	31,065	1,590	81,948
% Change	(+9.1%)	(-3.6%)	(-20.3%)	(+3.0%)
1980	47,966	30,153	1,487	84,226
% Change	(+7.3%)	(-2.9%)	(-6.5%)	(+2.8%)

DISTRIBUTION OF THE HISPANIC STUDENT POPULATION

For administrative purposes, the school system in Chicago is subdivided into twenty districts. As indicated in the following table, six out of every ten Hispanic students are enrolled in schools located in four school districts (#6, #5, #8, and #10).

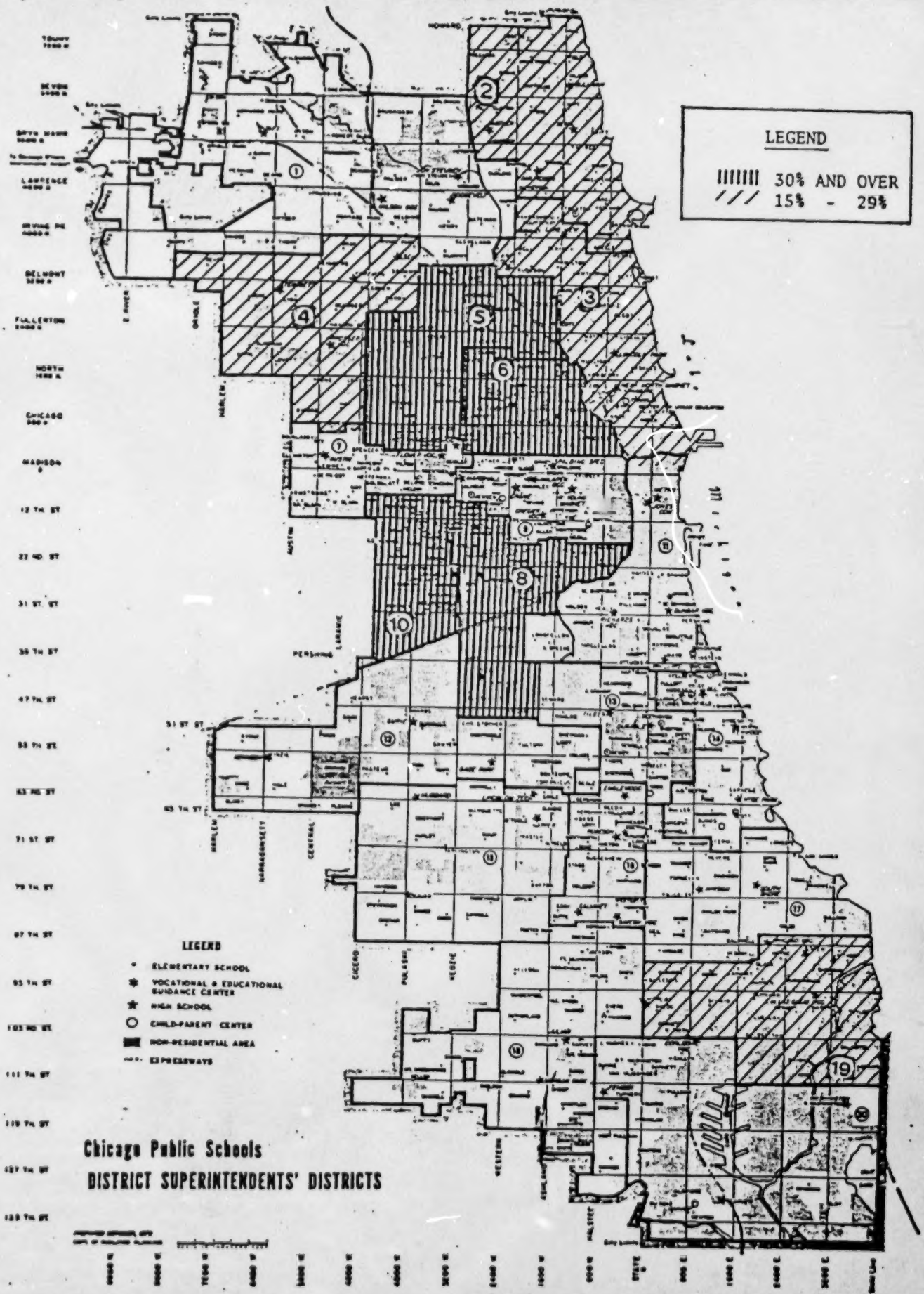
Contrary to what these figures may suggest, there are only two districts which are predominantly (more than 50%) Hispanic, and these two districts account for 38% of the Hispanic students. In other words, most Hispanic students attend desegregated school settings.

Table 6

Ranking of Districts by Number of Hispanic Students: 1980[4]

District	Number of Hispanic Students	% of All Hispanic Students	% of Total Students in District
6	17,424	21%	76%
5	14,735	17%	54%
8	12,008	14%	50%
10	7,012	8%	31%
3	5,342	6%	23%
2	5,146	6%	21%
19	4,902	6%	22%
4	3,431	4%	15%
12	2,896	3%	14%
1	2,843	3%	13%
13	2,212	3%	9%
11	1,734	2%	8%
9	1,546	2%	6%
15	1,073	1%	5%
17	993	1%	5%
20	604	1%	3%
7	111	---	1%
18	90	---	---
14	79	---	1%
16	45	---	---
Total	84,226	100%	18%

[4]Percentages have been rounded off.



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